Power of the pen: Half of children and young adults find comfort in putting pen to paper

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Nearly half (46%) of children and young people in the UK, feel better about something they were feeling sad about by writing down their thoughts and feelings â€“ UK charities Action for Children and The Princeâ€™s Trust â€“ in partnership with Royal Mail have launched a special toolkit which could support young people through turbulent times as the coronavirus continues to impact people across the UK and the globe.

New research by leading UK charities Action for Children and The Prince's Trust – in partnership with Royal Mail – shows that despite today's overload of social media and digital platforms, over a third of children and young people aged 11 to 21 years, explore their thoughts and feelings by putting pen to paper or engage in creative writing to help manage and support their mental health.

Over a quarter (27%) of children and young people write down their feelings on paper once a week or more. They said that writing down their thoughts and feelings on paper, rather than typing on a phone or laptop was the most effective way to 'process' how they are feeling.

Almost a third (31%) who wrote for therapeutic benefits said it helped them deal with difficult family situations and issues. Other ways in which children and young people said writing down their feelings helped, included: finding the solution to a problem, stopping them from saying something they didn't mean; and helping them feel better about going to school or work.

Case study: Harvey Sparrow (17) from Worcester says writing daily helped support his mental health when he was going through tough times.

"Writing means I can explore my thoughts and feelings by attaching words to them - which stops them from becoming overwhelming and something bigger in your head. When I see words written down on the page, my thoughts seem much easier to manage.

"I write almost every day and have a diary which I started a couple of years ago when I was going through some big mental health struggles. It began as a place for me to record my day because I couldn't remember things

when I was feeling anxious. Writing in my diary helped me keep focused and check in with myself. Seeing my thoughts and feelings as words on a page in front of me, makes me more inclined to deal with my problems. I really think it could help other people like me through the coronavirus lockdown."

Carol Iddon, Deputy Chief Executive at Action for Children, said: "The coronavirus crisis has exploded into the lives of children and young people at a time when huge numbers were already suffering mental health problems like anxiety and depression, only adding to the emotional pressure they were already under.

"Every day our frontline services see the pain and worry children face as they struggle to understand how they fit into the world – and now in the midst of a global pandemic we need to reduce the toll on mental health by giving them practical ways to cope.

"At a time where we're navigating a complex 24/7 world with constant stimulation from social media, the power of the pen could be a valuable tool for helping children to stay calm during these unprecedented times."

David Gold, Director of Public Affairs & Policy at Royal Mail said: "As the research suggests, writing is an important tool for preserving and improving mental health and this is especially important during such times of uncertainty. Writing down thoughts and feelings helps children and young people to digest emotions and feel better about difficult situations. We are very pleased to have worked with Action for Children and The Prince's Trust to create a toolkit to help younger people to strengthen their mental and emotional wellbeing.

"Royal Mail understands the important role we play in helping people to stay connected, especially during this challenging period for the UK."

Alice Granville, Senior Head of Research and Development at The Prince's Trust, adds: "It's encouraging to see from this research that young people are using writing as a way to express themselves and to take stock of how they're feeling.

"We've teamed up with Action for Children to co-create a series of writing activities that can help others to do the same – our toolkit includes a range of activity for everyone to try, either on their own, or with their families."

Source: Royal Mail

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